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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Take Two

STATION CNN-TV

DATE October 26, 1984 12:00 Noon CITY Atlanta, Ga.

SUBJECT Fighting Terrorism with Terrorism

LOIS HART: Should America fight terrorism with terrorism?

DON WALKER: Karl Ackerman was the head of the State Department's Office of Security, and as such was in charge of security, among other things, of the Marine Compound and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut from 1978 to '81.

HART: Mr. Ackerman is now the director of an international security consulting firm.

Welcome.

Should we fight terrorism with terrorism?

KARL ACKERMAN: Well, I don't think I'd choose the expression "with terrorism." We certainly should fight terrorism. These people are killing indiscriminately. They are killing many of our own citizens. And we must take measures, strong measures, to stamp this out. I would not characterize retaliatory action as terrorism.

HART: Well, if it involves innocent lives, which is what Secretary of Shultz said.

ACKERMAN: Well, that's -- what I think he was doing is saying to the American people, issuing a call for a stepped-up fight against terrorism, and warning that in that stepped-up fight there could be casualties amongst our own forces, there could be casualties in addition to those of the terrorists. It's a tough question. But he characterized elsewhere in his speech the fact that to be purely defensive on this matter is not good

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WALKER: Despite all the Israeli efforts and their policy in fighting terrorism, is this sort of response really effective? They continue to have problems with terrorist attacks.

ACKERMAN: Well, that's one of those things we don't really know. If they had not taken the strong stance in retaliation that they have, who is to say that they would not only have suffered a great deal more, but in fact might have their own national security in real jeopardy?

WALKER: Well, perhaps this is jeopardizing our image abroad to other countries when we announce, although we haven't followed this policy yet, that we should attack terrorists before we get, necessarily, all the facts, and that innocents may be killed, along with our own servicemen. Is this the sort of image that we want to project around the world?

ACKERMAN: Well, the Secretary did several things in his speech, if you recall, one of which was calling again, as the United States has done many times, for a concentrated effort on the part of the international community against terrorism. This is not a strictly go-it-alone policy on the part of the United States.

And secondly, I think that his call for support and understanding was tempered with the fact that this is a tough road. He clearly said we can expect our adversaries to characterize whatever we do in worse terms than what the terrorists themselves have done.

WALKER: This sounds as if we are entering a new era, that terrorism must finally be confronted with some policies, some military force that up until this point, at least, I would imagine, most Americans have not been readily willing to accept, particularly in the State Department, and the Defense Department as well.

ACKERMAN: I don't think it's so much a matter of willing to accept. Everybody is uniformly in support of the notion that terrorism must be fought. You touch the critical area when you say if we can't be sure that our counteraction is going to touch only the people who are guilty, then you have a problem. And to the extent that we do take actions of that kind in the future that may involve injury to others, yes, that would be a new departure.

HART: Why do you think Secretary Shultz made the remark about fighting terrorists, when the President in the debate last week said that it is not, specifically not, American policy to do so?

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ACKERMAN: Well, I don't want to get into a cross-commentary here between what the President said and what Mr. Shultz said. What I read, myself, is that the Secretary State, from a carefully prepared text, has made statements that, after all, are not inconsistent with the Administration's policy insofar as the fight against terrorism.

Now, if it comes down to this matter of retaliation, as the Secretary has described it, that may indeed represent a new departure.

HART: So, why do you think the Secretary might make a remark that is a departure from American policy?

ACKERMAN: Well, I can't...

[Confusion of voices]

ACKERMAN: I can't be sure of that, any more than any other citizen. What I do know is that the Secretary of State, speaking, again, from a prepared text, is clearly cognizant that his words will be carefully studied. And so I think the message should be read in that context.

WALKER: This is preparing America for that sort of a policy, perhaps.

ACKERMAN: Preparing them, or -- I'd prefer to choose the text that runs clearly through the message. He is calling for and asking for an understanding and support of the American people, and I might say clearly labeling that support as absolutely essential to any policy, particularly one that involves some risks.

WALKER: Before you go, we want to ask you quickly -- we have about a minute left. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is releasing a report today saying that the bombing of the American Embassy in East Beirut -- it was vulnerable because of what they call a tragically simple mistake. They didn't put up a gate, a movable barrier, or even a couple of parked cars.

Your comment?

ACKERMAN: Well, first of all, I would urge any serious reader of this problem -- and I intend to do so myself -- to get the text of the Senate Foreign Relations report, simply because several versions that I read of this in the paper this morning, one characterized it as a simple mistake. The other one took a totally different tack and pointed out that the report was not overly critical.

Having been in the position that I was, I can tell you

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that nothing is simple in these matters. And the fact that the gate wasn't up, I am certain, without knowing, I am certain that there are complicated explanations for why it wasn't up at that moment.

WALKER: All right. Thank you so much for taking time out today to join us.

And right now we're taking our sound-off calls on terrorism and security and that subject, terrorism and retaliation.

Go ahead.

MAN: I feel that right now, with the way things are in this Administration, we do not need to use nuclear or any kind of force with our armed services. We should try to find out who they are, and then get in there and take other actions beside military superiority in these situations.

WALKER: Next caller.

MAN: I think that allowing preemptive strikes against supposed terrorists opens the door for the Administration to intervene around the globe against what it purports to be terrorist actions without allowing a national consensus or a congressional assent. And I think that what it's going to present is the problem -- I realize I'm out of time. Go ahead.

HART: Our next call is from Collinsville, Illinois.

MAN: Some time ago there was an article in the U.S. News & World Report regarding taking the wraps off the CIA. And I think the CIA is one of the most valuable tools that we have. And the President needs to give them a little bit more power, and the people need to quit watching the CIA and let them do the job.

WALKER: Savannah, Georgia.

MAN: My name is Staff Sergeant Louis Jones. I'm from Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia.

I think it was a great statement that Secretary Shultz said about the United States giving preemptive strikes against other countries. I don't think that it will damage the United States's position. I think it will enhance our position worldwide, show our friendly -- show friendly countries, as well as our adversaries, that the United States is not going to always sit by and be hit on and hit on by countries that are little or not developed as well as we are. I think it was a very great idea.

HART: Anderson, Indiana.

MAN: My comment would be that I believe, yes, we should deal swiftly with terrorists when it is known who is doing the terrorist act.

Now, I do agree with Ronald Reagan that just to kill to be killing, that would be wrong. But I do believe this: If he knows or has any indication who is doing these terrorist acts, yes, I think we should do it, because we're a sitting duck for these people, and they will continually do this to us, I'm afraid.

WALKER: That's all the time we have for our sound-off calls.